

Daily Herald

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Group attacks tax process

Residents demand change in how property is assessed in Lake County

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A citizens group, sparked by what they regard as unfair increases in their property tax assessments, says the system has to change.

The Citizens' Action Project of Grayslake is not questioning the amount of their tax bills. Instead, the nonprofit group is attacking the process by which values are assigned and ultimately used to calculate the bills.

The group has called a news conference for 6 p.m. today at the county building in Waukegan in advance of a rare evening meeting of the Lake County Board.

"We're hoping for a reaction, one way or another," said Thor Madsen, spokesman for the group. "Our hope is by going to the board, we'll raise the visibility of this."

Assessment increases of as much as 20 percent in the portion of Prairie Crossing in Avon Township sparked initial interest from several hundred residents, Madsen said. From that, emerged a core group of about 20 who spent six months and hundreds of hours researching the system.

Values of approximately 250,000 parcels are determined separately by each of the county's 18 township assessors. The group claims few assessors can provide a "consistent explanation" of how they arrive at assessments.

Other alleged problems include inaccuracies and uneven treatment of similar properties.

"We believe that public trust has eroded to the point that the only salvage strategy would be for the Lake County Board and/or the Illinois state legislature to conduct their own investigations and to consider remedies," the group says in a 50-page paper on real estate assessment practices.

County board member Larry Leafblad of Grayslake, long has been critical of what he described as a "broken assessment process."

"I'm standing in awe of their work right now," he said. "I've been working on this for five years, and I still don't understand what's going on."

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